Gov't files 622 cases vs 18 firms in tax credit scam

Makati principal tops Gintong Ilawan Awards

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, February 9, 2004

WHAT'S INSIDE

Gov't wants peace with Reds by May

NDF sees bid as GMA leverage for poll campaign



PNP gripe session with Ebdane gets political

FPJ braces for details of private life

By Cynthia D. Balana

Presidential candidates should face off on economic issues

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS



Palace hand seen in Ping sked foul-up

German pilot to fly museum plane to promote RP

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk



GERMAN pilot Capt. Iren Dornier (inset) will fly this World War II vintage seaplane to 52 countries for one year to promote the Philippines as a tourism and investment destination.

622 cases filed in tax credit scam

'Manapat report would have pitted Senate vs SC'

Sin was being generous to Roco, retorts Palace

Indonesia pledges to

INDONESIA'S support has rekindled hopes the Philippines' bid for observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference will finally be granted.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert said that during her official visit to Jakarta on Thursday she was assured by her counterpart, Foreign Minister Noer Hassan Wirayuda, of Indonesia's support for the Philippines' observer status application.

Manila hopes to be accepted as an OIC observer by July when the 56-member aggrupation holds its annual conference in Istanbul, Turkey.

Albert told Wirayuda the Philippines looks up to Indonesia's leadership in the OIC as chair of the group's Committee of the Eight.

The Philippines formally filed its application for observer status during the OIC foreign ministers' summit in Tehran in May 2003.

Manila hopes the Istanbul meeting would result in positive action on the country's application, together with those of other nations.

During the 10th OIC Summit in Kuala Lumpur last October, the Philippines failed to have its application acted upon despite the presence of President Macapagal-Arroyo who was invited to address the gathering.

The OIC also failed to act on similar applications from Russia, South Africa and Ghana as the summit focused on the rehabilitation of war-torn Iraq.

In 1977, the OIC gave the Moro National Liberation Front observer status as the representative of the Filipino Muslim community.

Wirayuda assured Albert of Jakarta's continued assistance to the Philippines' efforts to find lasting peace in Mindanao. Indonesia played a key role in the signing of the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF in 1996 and maintains a keen interest in the progress of the peace process in Mindanao.

In a separate meeting with Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Albert expressed the Philippines' gratitude for the continuing close relations between the two countries.

Albert said the close relationship was "reflective of the warm friendship between Presidents Megawati and Macapagal." *Jerome Aning*

Activist would leave streets to get behind solon's desk

By Norman Bordadora

"I MAKE this look good."

Or at least Teddy Casiño intends to try if the left-leaning party-list group Bayan Muna gathers enough votes to grab a third seat in the House of Representatives in the May elections.

After more than a decade of turning himself into one of the more familiar faces in the streets demanding workers' rights or the resignation of corrupt officials, Casiño is ready to join two other "progressive" leaders in Bayan Muna's quest for party-list seats in an otherwise "reactionary" Congress.

"Because we can't always be in the streets; we can't always remain as lobbyists," Casiño told the INQUIRER , when asked to explain the exodus of militant leaders such as himself from the front lines of protest marches to desks in the legislature.

"Congress provides us with an opportunity to bring the people's issues into the mainstream. Even in reactionary institutions like Congress, there is space for doing good and serving the people," Casiño said.

Aside from Casiño, Bayan Muna is fielding incumbent Rep. Satur Ocampo and Caloocan City councilor Nathanael Santiago as its three nominees for party-list seats.

Ocampo is a former spokesperson of the communist National Democratic Front. Santiago has been an activist since his student days as head of the League of Filipino Students.

"Bayan Muna has proven the value of having representatives in Congress. They have proposed bills, authored resolutions and sponsored projects worthwhile to the marginalized sectors which comprise the majority of Bayan's constituents," Casiño said.

He said that most of Bayan Muna's pork barrel under the Priority Development Assistance Fund went into the construction of 110 school buildings, 174 multi-purpose halls and 109 water systems.

"These were in places I'd never even heard of before, places and sectors totally neglected by the government," Casiño said.

As for Bayan Muna's chances of duplicating its record 1.7-million votes garnered in 2001 which made it the top party-list group, Casiño said the party's track record would help it cancel out the disadvantage of no longer being in the administration coalition.

"Bayan Muna is now a more established party, consistently visible and with a good track record in terms of legislative work and grassroots projects. It also has more allies and friends," Casiño said.

"Ka Satur is really the most respected among us. Nath, on the other hand, is *maginoo pero medyo bastos*(gentlemanly but crude). *Ako naman, pa-cute na palaban*(While I am cutely aggressive)," Casiño said in jest.

"The cast is complete," he added.

Terror link in the way of talks

DAVAO CITY—The resumption of peace talks between the government and Muslim separatist rebels may be stymied by suspected links between the latter group and the regional militant network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a top military official said Sunday.

Government peace negotiators said JI "would remain to be a continuing major concern" that may affect the talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), military chief of staff Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia said.

"We have an ongoing mission pertaining to the JI," Garcia told reporters here after meeting with an MILF panel enforcing a cease-fire pact with the government.

The government is still trying to establish whether members of JI—the group thought to be responsible for the October 2002 Bali, Indonesia bombing—were training in MILF camps in Mindanao, he said.

The MILF had earlier denied having links with the JI, said to be the Southeast Asian arm of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida international terror network. *AFP*

ENTERTAINMENT



Kidman dismisses breast cancer rumors

[illegible]

KIDMAN continues to appear healthy at recent award ceremonies.

Nominally interesting start for 'Te Amo'

VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

[illegible]

'Annie B.'

[illegible]

Christine Carlos at Azzurro

[illegible]

100 Most Beautiful Necklaces

[illegible]

JDV: Deep divisions to blame for Senate's poor showing



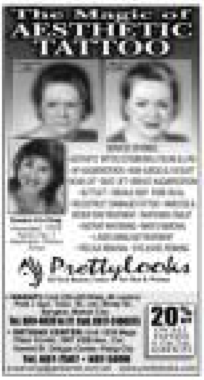
PNP gripe session with Ebdane gets political

Drivers biggest drug abusers—Lina









FPJ braces for details of private life

Media critics

Platform

The Daily Gospel



The WORLD

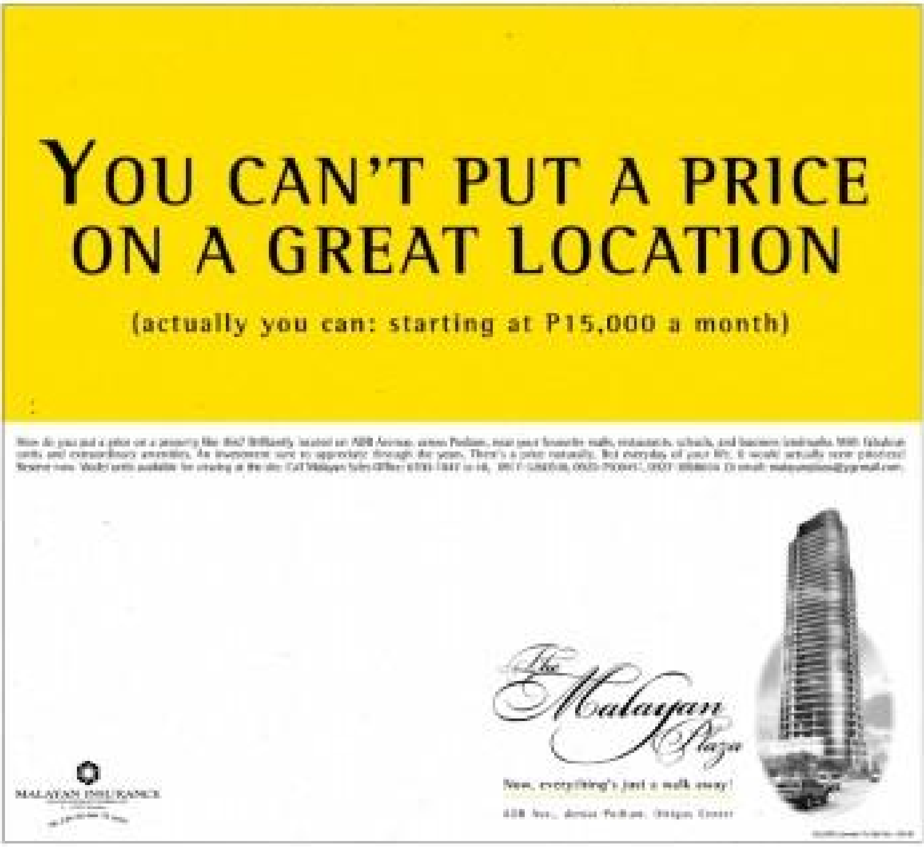
Asian nations ban chickens from US



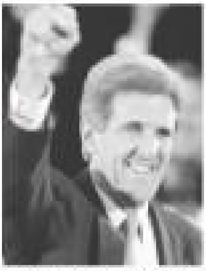








Kerry pockets Michigan, Washington, slams Bush



KERRY reacting to the crowd after big wins.

Israel kills Jihad commander

20 killed in Afghan clashes



Terrorists seen having the will, expertise to employ dirty bomb

Bush won't sack Tenet despite intel blunders



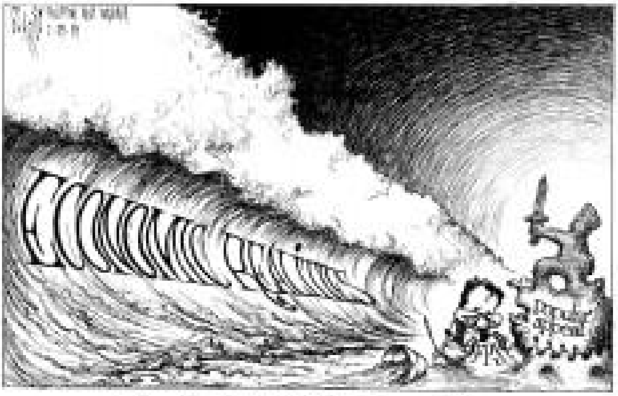
TENET

Vietnamese victims sue makers of Agent Orange



VIETNAM War Agent Orange victim Thai Thi Ha, 11, from the central province of Nghe An, clapping and singing during a fund-raising meeting for Agent Orange victims in Hanoi in June 2003. AFP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
OPINION



'Meron'

IT was, by any objective measure, a grudging admission. Asked by TV journalist Jessica Soho if he did in fact sire a child by actress Ana Marin, opposition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. answered yes.

Actually, he said "Meron"—meaning "I do" or more precisely "I do have a child by her"—and then left it at that. He did not name his son, whom he later said he was proud of.

EDITORIALS

His political supporters immediately hailed Poe's admission—made under pressure, offered without specifics, over two decades after the fact—as an almost heroic act of transparency. "This is the kind of leader Filipinos are looking for—one who is not afraid of the truth," said Didagen Dilangalen, Maguindanao representative and a senatorial candidate on Poe's ticket.

"FPJ is honest about everything. He told everything. We should appreciate that," his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, told reporters. "It's not an issue to me because every person has his past. It's always a blessing to have a child," she added.

This is the kind of answer that raises old and awkward questions yet again, especially of those politicians enjoying their second marriages or reported to be romantically involved with someone other than their spouses. But did Poe really reveal "everything"?

He may have other children by women other than his wife. An opposition spokesperson hinted at more disclosures, but added coyly that it was up to Poe to make them.

If this is, as Dilangalen avers, a portrait of a leader who is not afraid of the truth, then the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino has redefined honesty and transparency.

'Wala'

UNFORTUNATELY, the hullabaloo over Fernando Poe Jr.'s "love child" has obscured what may well be the essential insight of that GMA-7 interview. Poe is running on motherhood statements because he does not feel the need to offer specifics.

It is not a question of strategy alone. The "no talk, no mistake" principle Sen. Gene Magsaysay enunciated a generation ago applies but only up to a point. The "no debate" tactic Erap Estrada ran has only a limited bearing. It seems likely that Poe does not see the need to fill in the blanks because he does not see any blanks to fill in in the first place.

That, at least, is what a close reading of the interview's transcript, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, suggests.

When Poe, a movie actor for over 40 years, says that, and we quote, "I went to the squatters, those who are poor, up in the mountains, to every corner in the country, and I see what is really happening," he not only means it, he may think it is enough. "I think some people," he says in English, before switching to Filipino, "don't really see the true situation of the common people." But by implication, he does, and it is enough.

In fact, he sidesteps the question of his lack of an economic platform by casting the spotlight back on his questioners. After it was noted that the issue was raised by businessmen such as those allied with the Makati Business Club, Poe says, in Filipino: "My obligation is not to them, but to the people. That is my obligation. That will be my responsibility to them." And again, by implication, it is enough.

When he says he does have a platform of government, and is then pressed for details on his economic plan, he replies, "I have an economic team," but later, when he is asked about reports that it will be politicians like Edgardo Angara, Juan Ponce Enrile, Ernesto Maceda and Vicente Sotto III who will run his administration he answers in Filipino: "That's not true. Maybe that's what people who don't know me say about me." In other words, everything boils down to character: his own. And it is enough. Asked, as a parting shot, why people should vote for him, he says, in English, "Because I'm honest."

It's the H-word again. But what does it mean? We know now that for the KNP it doesn't mean fidelity to one's spouse. ("Every person has his past.") We know now that it doesn't mean accepting the negative consequences of one's act. (This issue will earn "good points for him," Sotto said.) For Poe, who is not tainted by government service, honesty means not being corrupt. That is all, but he thinks it is enough.

The battle for Philippine skies

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

LIKE the Battle of Britain during World War II, a battle for Philippine skies is now raging. The battle consists of full-page advertisements between advocates of "open skies" and a group of local airlines and their supporters who call themselves SOS (for Save Our Skies) [illegible].

Open skies advocates, led by the President's [illegible], want to open up Philippine air space to as many international airlines as possible [illegible] Filipino [illegible] hurt [illegible] local airline industry [illegible] passenger fares.

The SOS group claims that, on the contrary, open skies will put the Philippine carriers at the mercy of giant international airlines, deprive thousands of domestic airline workers of their jobs, and raise fares, because once local airlines go bankrupt, the international giants will increase theirs. This was what happened when Singapore Airlines and [illegible] Qantas were able to bump off Philippine Airlines from their routes.

Caught in the middle is a member of the Civil Aeronautics Board, Alberto Lim, and a former member, Vicente Lirio. [illegible]

Last week, a full-page ad [illegible] in major dailies. Last Wednesday, SOS came out with its own full-page ad refuting that ad. [illegible]

Also in Wednesday's papers was another full-page ad, this time defending [illegible]. [illegible]

Lim sits at the CAB supposedly to protect our representative. [illegible]

Without taking sides, let me explain the controversy as I see it. The US aviation industry wants to open Philippine skies to its own carriers. This means that US carriers will be allowed to land and take off and pick up passengers in any Philippine airport as often as they like. The right to an open is traditionally given on a reciprocal basis. The right granted by one country to another country's carriers is the same right granted to the host country's carriers as well. That's only fair, right?

But in the proposed situation between the United States and the Philippines, there is no reciprocity. While US carriers will have unlimited access to Philippine airports, our own carriers will be limited to only a few US airports. What's more, US carriers can pick up passengers from RP airports and fly them anywhere, but RP carriers cannot pick up passengers from US airports and fly them to another US airport.

"We are fighting for fair skies and for fair competition," says SOS. "We are not against the 'open skies policy' as long as it is also open skies to fair and equitable competition. We are against monopolies. We demand reciprocity in trade agreements as a sound business practice. We cannot allow our competitors to have access to our market while we don't have access to theirs."

[illegible]

"The RP-US Air Transport Agreement does not provide for a level playing field between RP and US carriers. [illegible]"

But why me? After all, US lobbyists make no secret of their goal to grab more markets. In its official website, USAID said: "Liberalization offers the prospect of broader [illegible] access to the Philippine domestic market of 79 million people and the possibility of creating more export-oriented jobs in the United States."

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE:

Comelec: There are many allegations for your disqualification. One allegation says you are not a Filipino citizen. Another allegation says your father is a Spaniard and your mother is an American. Another allegation is that you are an illegitimate child.

FPJ: Who are these alligators?

Postscript to prostitution

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

[illegible]

Well, I did warn Loren Legarda, the object of that [illegible], from office and [illegible]. [illegible]

[illegible]

Spark public outrage, which became Erap. If you play the part of Maria Clara, you will be called Maria Clara [illegible].

But those who say Loren is not the sole, or worst, exponent of political prostitution are right. From where I stand, the phrase "political prostitute" in this country is a redundancy, or tautology. [illegible]

Politics in this country is an organized institution as prostitution is an organization suggests [illegible]

[illegible]

The [illegible]

[illegible]

Prostitution? We're the veritable capital of the world.

Battle lines drawn



POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

Bird flu news



READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

The expert



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

The origins of celebrity politics



THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

Abolish the death penalty

[illegible]

LETTERS

Ifma properly approved

[illegible]

For the sake of accuracy

[illegible]

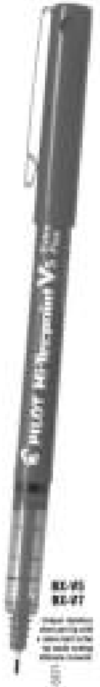
Philippine environment report documented

[illegible]

Cavite execs accused of pocketing ₱11M

Radio men face arrest

Negros treasury officer probed



Across the NATION

Soldiers told to stay neutral

TACLOBAN CITY—Stay neutral or face sanctions, Major General Glen Rabonza, commanding general of the Army's 8th Infantry Division based in Samar, told soldiers here.

[illegible]



THE CHANGEABLE Hawk-eagle.

Group saves wounded eagle from captivity

LUCENA CITY—An environmental group rescued an injured "Changeable Hawk-eagle" [illegible]

[illegible]

Remove campaign materials, local candidates asked

DAVAO CITY—The Commission on Elections in Southern Mindanao has given political candidates three days to tear down posters, streamers or billboards that bear their faces and names.

[illegible]

INFOTECH

PLDT loses dispute over domain name

Chipmaker AMD raids RP stores, 'fake' chips found

Makati principal tops Gintong Ilawan Awards

Transforming a school



Taking in 'rejects'

'I'm needed here'

Gov't wants peace with Reds by May

Talking points

Campaign fees

Another round

German pilot to fly museum ...

Promoting RP

'Flying boat'

Patterned after whales

Glass dome

Presidential bets should face off on economic issues

Critical issue

Budget deficits

Tough solutions

Palace hand seen in Ping sked foul-up

Adopted son


In BGE, you'll go picture-taking . . .


Go on stealth mode . . .


Go hand-to-hand with aliens . . .


Kick some critter's butt . . .

'Beyond Good and Evil' goes beyond ordinary




Race and fight on a hovercraft . . .

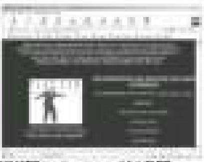

Blast aliens away from your spaceship . . .


Do karate chops and pig out with a porker . . .


And generally just hang out with weird creatures.

SAS on the rebound, eyes 35% business growth in RP

PLDT loses dispute over . . .


WHAT'S in a domain name? Ask PLDT.

Chipmaker AMD raids RP . . .

MetroBriefs

QC water cutoff

2 theft suspects fall

Drinking in public

Marikina investors

PUP homecoming

KATIPUNAN TREE ROW

Raps poised against BF, MMDA

Court order

Pictures

WPD empowers low rank officers

Active roles

METRO

Comelec warns opportunists as national campaign starts



Trash talks falter

NCRPO vows more village night raids

SPORTS


ARCILLA: Three tough matches in 3 days

Dog-tired Arcilla prevents shutout

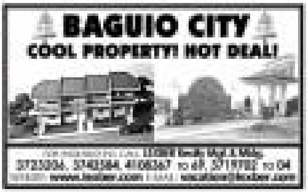
Swedes stun Australians

Philippoussis goes from hero to zero as Davis Cup champs fall

ADELAIDE, Australia—Jonas Bjorkman knocked defending champion Australia out of the Davis Cup on Sunday beating Mark Philippoussis, 7-5, 6-2, 6-2, and giving Sweden an unbeatable 3-1 lead.


PHILIPPOUSSIS

AP



Thais coming for National Open trackfest

Watch out for Tour neophytes

Laurente, foe in split draw

NBI pursues probe of Asi citizenship



VERSUS PACQUIAO

Mexican champion seeks revenge

Sportswatch





Sobbing, laughing with the former PBL commissioner

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

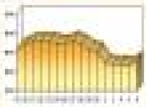
BUSINESS

BSP poises tighter forex policies

CURRENCIES



STOCK MARKET



Group urges suspension of petroleum taxes

BSP warns of tighter money policies to stem peso slide



The global economy: Challenges and opportunities for Mindanao

MINDANAWORLD



Joji Ilagan-Bian

FORMER Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos once said, "we must learn to swim with the sharks—or drown in the rising tide of globalization."

I'm sure there are divergent views as to President Ramos' chosen strategy during his term. Regardless of our views on the former President—and I respect all your educated opinions—I think President Ramos hit the nail right on the head when he said this.

As I have often stressed in past presentations, globalization is upon us.

Recent changes in the global marketplace have opened windows of opportunities for Mindanao's economy. New trade pacts such as the GATT, WTO and the CEPT scheme have the overall effect of enlarging the potential markets for Mindanao's goods and services.

Now is the time for Mindanao to take advantage of these opportunities. Relative to Northern Philippines, the island has more natural resources, a stronger and more competitive agricultural base and a highly entrepreneurial, literate and, in large measure, empowered populace.

These strengths, however, are fragile and highly limited. Unless they are judiciously managed and vigorously reinforced through major structural reforms, the island economy will be ill-equipped to compete in the international market.

Current scenario

We can safely assume that Mindanao is still a far cry from our objectives of a truly vibrant regional sub-economy, but this is understandable as we have yet to resolve major and chronic impediments, like our conflict and poverty situations.

Nevertheless, the current trend shows moderate successes in various niches of our economy: increasing investments in the island reflect signs of improving business sector; gradual increase in business activity as indicated by the increasing cargo traffic that comes in and out of Mindanao, and, Mindanao is currently enjoying the improving economic climate in Asia as shown in the positive growth of our foreign exports. Overall foreign exports performance slightly improved last year with a projected 21.6 percent increase from the 2002 level.

Recent developments in Mindanao pertinent to global competitiveness:

- Tariff reductions on Mindanao exports

The announcement of the President last year regarding the US government's decision to include selected Philippine products including banana, pineapple and canned tuna in the US Generalized System of Preference (GSP) is a welcome development.

The United States consumes almost 30 percent of Mindanao's tuna exports and nearly 55 percent of our pineapple exports (fresh and processed). Mindanao shall likewise benefit from the acceptance of bananas in the US-GSP because Mindanao provides for more than 95 percent of the country's banana export requirements. More importantly, this development will unburden our tuna exporters particularly from General Santos and Zamboanga around 6-12 percent tariff duties.

Aside from tuna, the inclusion of other products such as seaweeds and pineapple juice will further boost our Carrageenan and pineapple industries in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and General Santos City, Bukidnon, respectively.

- The Strong Republic Nautical Highway

Launched by the president last year, the SRNH marks the culmination of a five-year advocacy to implement an out-of-the-box solution pushed by the Mindanao Business Groups to reduce sea transport cost using the Road Roll-on Roll-off port terminal system.

While contributing to a more cost-competitive Mindanao commodity base, the nautical highway is intended to radically transform how our agricultural goods are transported through consolidation. Consolidation is the key toward a more cost-efficient transport of goods and prepares our farmers for the next level in exporting through inter-modal linkages.

- Other developments in the transport sector

Facilitating access to foreign markets are the other developments related to transport. One is the addition in our international air linkages through the General Santos-Bitung air route.

The other is the recent opening of the new Davao International Airport. The DIA again is a major accomplishment for Mindanao stakeholders in the relentless push for its opening late last year. Having been pronounced by President Macapagal-Arroyo as the hub to the BIMP-Eaga, this development will spur the business community and the local government to ensure its viability.

- The Doha "debacle"

As you very well know, WTO member-countries met in Doha, Qatar, last November 2003. The consensus was to launch another round of negotiations for the World Trade Organization. The new round of negotiations begins this year, 2004.

This event is significant for us in three ways: First, what happened at Doha is not

mindanaoworld@...

BOI, Peza investments rose 1.7% in 2003

By Michelle V. Remo

DESPITE negative events early in the year, government-registered investments slightly grew by 1.7 percent in 2003 due to the entry of big projects in the second half.

The Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority reported a combined approved investments of P56.73 billion in 2003, which was higher than the P55.8 billion recorded the previous year.

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said big-ticket projects in the latter part of 2003 were able to compensate for the slowdown in investments in the first half that was brought by the impact of the US-Iraq war and the SARS outbreak.

He noted that the 34-percent rise in investments in the second half of 2003 offset the 29-percent slump in the first six months of the year.

Purisima cited the projects of Victorias Bioenergy Inc. and Consolidated Mining Co.—two of the biggest investments made last year amounting to P4.58 billion and P4 billion, respectively.

"We see a silver lining in terms of investments this year, especially with the resurgence of the world economy," Purisima said.

He added that the projected growth in the economies of the United States and Japan—major trading partners of the Philippines—is expected to result in the entry of more foreign investments this year.

The trade chief also said that increased investments led to an increase in employment last year. Peza earlier reported that employment among firms registered with the government agency last year grew by 10.10 percent.

Purisima added that 60,000 more jobs were expected to be generated once the 401 newly approved projects become fully operational this year.

Of the total investments registered last year, foreign investors accounted for P33.27 billion, while the locals poured in P23.46 billion.

The real estate, renting and business activities sector posted the highest investment growth of 313 percent last year. From P903 million in 2002, investments contributed by the sector soared to P3.73 billion in 2003.

Investments from the electricity, gas and water supply sector likewise grew by 269 percent to P7.29 billion last year from P2.71 billion in 2002.

Investments in the agriculture and forestry sector jumped by 223 percent to P2.71 billion from P841 million in 2002.

Investments in the information technology sector, which includes the "sunshine industry" of contact centers, grew 23 percent last year to P6.42 billion. About 69 percent of total IT investments in 2003 came from contact centers, which poured in P4.46 billion.

Digitel launches new phone program

DIGITAL Telecommunications Inc. (Digitel) has launched a program that allows Filipino residents to get a phone line that is paid in advance by their relatives based in the United States.

The Phone@Home program is in partnership with the Fil-Am Phone Club of the USA and targets first-time phone subscribers, said Digitel vice president for marketing Rosemarie Pineda.

"We're also looking at making this program available in the near future to Filipinos in Japan, Hong Kong, Milan and other destinations where there is an abundance of Filipino contract workers who can pay for the telephone lines of their relatives here in Luzon," she said.

Pineda said the Phone@Home lines can be used for unlimited local calls. Long distance calls are charged through Digitel's pre-paid card facility, Digikard, which can also be used for Internet access.

Pineda said that for the relatives here, there will be no monthly bills to worry about since the monthly fees have all been paid for by the relatives abroad.

Pineda said a Fil-Am Phone Club member in the United States only has to call 1-800-220-5194 to subscribe for his relatives in the Philippines, choose the package, confirm availability of facilities in his relatives' area and pay the subscription fee. Installation of the phone line and unit will follow soon after payment has been confirmed.

Impsa gets gov't permit to operate CBK facilities

Napocor fuel supply biddings fail

Bills, bills, bills

No Free Lunch



Cielito F. Habito

Slim pickings

Down the drain

Enforcement: the other half

Lhuillier reloaded

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

All bases covered

Heard through the grapevine

Public debt hit ₱5.39T in end-Sept '03

SEC chair backs PSE board on sale of bourse shares



BAUTISTA

PSE approves election guidelines

Public debt hit . . .

Group urges suspension . . .

Bargain-hunting

BSP poises tighter . . .

BSP warns of tighter . . .

The great brain drain

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

MWSS favors BNP Paribas loan offer

MindanaWorld



BAP calls for inclusion of tax assets in capital

GRAND ASIA CAPITAL

San Miguel keen on acquiring cash-strapped investment firm



Lowly 'ube' saves a dying 'hopia' business in Binondo

SUCCESS STORY



DOTC ready to resume stalled air talks with US

Mango exporters ask government for help to pay quarantine fees

Arts & Design LIFESTYLE
Editor: Chelo Banal-Formoso
Sub-section Editor: Lito Zulueta

The rondalla rocks!

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

An international festival in Bicol pays tribute to the truly global folk music form—the humble rondalla





THE UP Rondalla (right) is backed up by a double bass (left).

THE INTERNATIONAL Festival on the Rondalla, ongoing now in Naga and Legazpi in Bicol until Feb. 14, is the first of its kind in the country. It features performances, outreach presentations, exhibits and a seminar-workshop on the historical development of the rondalla as well as an exchange of performance techniques and styles to be shared by the participating rondalla ensembles.

The festival is a major project of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) with the City Government of Naga, the Development Institute of Bicolano Artists Foundation, Inc., and the City Government of Legazpi. An additional performance will be held at the CCP Main Theater on Feb. 17, 7:30 p.m.

The festival, says Maria Rita Fosoni, executive director of the NCCA, is "a long-awaited activity" that forms an integral part of the current National Arts Month, which has as its theme "Sining Pinoy 2004—[illegible] sa Mabilisang Kamalayan."

The rondalla festival is billed to appropriate Bicolano, "Cuerdas nin Kagabsan," which means "Strings for All," to signify "Strings for Unity."

Dr. Ramon P. Santos, chair of NCCA's National Committee on Music, conceptualized the project and who heads the festival's steering committee, noted that the festival promotes Unesco's International Music Council Action Program on Musical Diversity and underscores a "fresh strategy in advancing the cause of world peace and understanding through the celebration of common musical patrimonies."

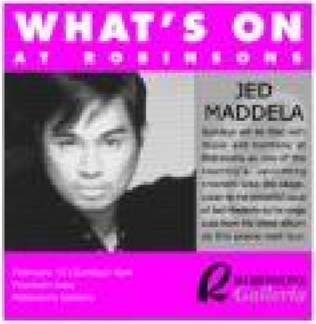
He adds that the International Music Council Executive Committee has expressed interest in its first quarter meeting for 2004 to observe the festival's proceedings in Bicol. The members of the committee represent more than 10 countries from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East.

Historic

The festival, Dr. Santos continues, is a "historic undertaking," as attention is focused on an "important, yet often overlooked piece of musical inheritance."

He categorizes the rondalla as a "primary emblem of the national heritage in the performing arts" that has become an "indispensable element" in the nation's social activities, as it has formed part of the "life cycle events of Filipinos in both rural and urban surroundings," providing aesthetic fulfillment to our national life not only in the

THE RONDALLA C2





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